National Museum of Scotland displays work by



A piece of work from the Panjab Connections project Kat Gollock

National Museums Scotland (NMS) received £16,400 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for the Panjab Connections project.

The core group of volunteers involved were members of the Young Sikh Leaders Network based at Glasgow Gurdwara. Aged 11-25, the Network undertake a wide variety of voluntary work to support their local community.

The volunteers created three films inspired by the life of Maharaja Duleep Singh, his separation from his mother as a child and the experiences of Scottish Sikhs today. They also made jewellery inspired by objects once worn by the Maharaja which are now in National Museums Scotland's collections, and photographed members of Scotland’s Sikh community.

Maharaja Duleep Singh

Duleep Singh became Maharaja of the Sikh Empire in 1843 aged five but, by the age of 10, he was deposed and later exiled to Britain. During his teenage years he regularly spent time in Scotland, where Castle Menzies in Perthshire had been leased for him.

NMS' collections include jewellery and personal belongings of Duleep Singh and a recently commissioned portrait by renowned British artists The Singh Twins, which was unveiled as part of the exhibition Indian Encounters. This exquisite work details the complex history of Duleep Singh and reassesses his role in British-Indian relations; it also explores the concepts and significance of belief, identity and ownership.

Using these collections, NMS supported the group to research the history of Duleep Singh. The project focused on the young people developing new skills including film making, audio recording and visual art, as they explored his story and produced a creative response.

By drawing on their own unique perspective as young Scottish Sikhs, the group's work has produced an engaging alternative to NMS' interpretation of this fascinating collection. The resources created from this project will provide a lasting legacy that will engage more people with Duleep Singh's story and that of British and Scottish Sikhs today.

Commenting on the award, Dr Gordon Rintoul, Director of NMS, said: "It is vitally important that the national collections are as accessible as possible to everyone. Panjab Connections represents an innovative way of extending that access to the local community groups and young volunteers involved in the project. We have enjoyed working with them and are delighted to present the results of their creative engagement with the collections material."

Lucy Casot, Head of HLF Scotland, said: "We are enthusiastic about giving young people the chance to learn about heritage. Thanks to National Lottery players our Young Roots programme helps them to bring fresh ideas and energy to the task. Panjab Connections is an excellent example of how they can get involved, take decisions, develop new skills and interests, connect with their communities and have fun."

Charandeep Singh from Young Sikh Leaders Network said: "Collaborating with NMS on this project has been a truly rewarding experience. By learning new skills to explore our rich heritage, we are proud to showcase the experiences and values of the Scottish Sikh community through Panjab Connections. Its inspiring message of community, family and roots will play a vital role in promoting Scotland's rich history and links with Panjab."

The work will be on display at the National Museum of Scotland until 1 April.

Notes to editors

- **NMS** looks after museum collections of national and international importance and provides loans, partnerships, research and training in Scotland and internationally. NMS' individual museums are: the National Museum of Scotland, the National Museum of Flight, the National Museum of Rural Life and the National War Museum
- **The National Museum of Scotland** reopened in summer 2011 following a three-year, £50million redevelopment. With over 8m visitors since reopening, the National Museum of Scotland is the most popular museum in the country outside of London according to ALVA figures
- **The Singh Twins** are contemporary British artists whose award-winning paintings have been acknowledged as constituting a unique genre in British art and for initiating a new movement in the revival of the Indian miniature tradition. Combining elements from western and eastern aesthetics they assert the value of traditional and non-European art forms to contemporary art practice. In 2011 they were each awarded an MBE
- **Young Sikh Leaders Network** based at Glasgow Gurdwara is a group of young adults who organise, campaign and engage with the local community on a weekly basis. The first purpose-built Sikh Gurdwara in Scotland, Glasgow Gurdwara opened in April 2013. It serves the whole community by promoting free education services, a free kitchen, faith and cultural services and political engagement activities

Further Information

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